

## Lucky Comment and WDFW Response on Welts Property Restoration

Ms. Lucky,

Thank you for submitting your comments regarding the proposed Samish River Unit (Welts) Wetland Restoration Project.

I understand that you are concerned with several issues regarding how the property is currently managed, and suggest banning hunting on the property and fishing on the Samish River, which is adjacent to the WDFW property. The SEPA permit application to which we are seeking comments is for the proposed wetland restoration project. Your comments regarding hunting and fishing relate to how the property is currently managed, which is not intended to be modified as a result of this project. Concerns with how the property is managed will be addressed in a forum separate from comment periods associated with permit applications for this wetland restoration project. To begin to answer some of the questions we are commonly asked about the property, we have drafted a FAQ sheet, which is attached.

I understand that you would support full restoration of the property. Setting back the dikes to reconnect the property to the floodplain of the Samish River was considered as an initial design concept. This concept was ruled out, however, as salmon restoration funding agencies were not likely to fund this project due to high cost and relatively low benefit to recovery of ESA-listed Chinook salmon compared to higher priority projects in the Skagit River. Although there is money available for salmon restoration projects in Puget Sound, these funds are typically prioritized and issued competitively to projects deemed highest priority by the agency issuing funds. If salmon recovery priorities change in the future, however, implementation of this project does not necessarily preclude future work.

Thank for your comments, and please contact me if you have any additional questions.

Loren

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**Subject:** Comment on SEPA No. 13073

October 30, 2013

Re: WDFW's Samish River Unit aka Welts Property

I do not believe the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW) should manage this property for the benefit of hunters. We have suffered their stewardship of this land for several years. Here are some highlights:

- I have personally had shotgun pellets rain down on me and my property, more than once, by hunters allowed on the Welts Property
- I have retrieved injured ducks, shot and abandoned, by hunters allowed on the Welts Property
- I have been woken up as early as 4:15am by shotgun blasts coming from hunters allowed on the Welts Property
- I watched a hunter on the Welts Property shoot at ducks flying over the Bayview-Edison Road
- More often than not, hunters allowed on the Welts Property use the Dike on the Samish River to shoot at ducks flying across the river. Rarely do they have dogs for retrieval or any type of boat that would allow them to retrieve injured or killed wildlife.

Due to alleged budget constraints, the Samish River was closed to fishing on September 8, 2013. We were told the WDFW did not have adequate funding to allow for enforcement AT THIS LOCATION. You propose creating a project that will “reasonably” result in 50 visitors per day. (This does not include fishing season) Where is the additional funding that will:

- Increase enforcement of the hunting regulations?
- Meet the needs of 50 visitors per day for sanitation? (Certainly one portable toilet does not)
- Maintain the property year after year?

I’m not against what I believe is the intent of the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) – to “Restore the Wetlands”. As I remember, a condition is that any proposals would allow no more than “Quiet Recreation”. Shooting guns is NOT QUIET. In whose neighborhood is shooting guns considered quiet?

I could support your project if:

1. Ban hunting on your property; and
2. Ban fishing and access to fishing from your property; or provide parking and portable toilets for the 100 – 200 Anglers that currently use your property from August 1<sup>st</sup> through the close of the season; and
3. Encourage Bird Watchers – maybe even build a Viewing Station & place nesting “trees” for Birds of Prey; or
4. Remove the Dike along the Samish River and actually restore the land to its pre-agricultural state.

Funds are clearly available to restore the property to its pre-agricultural condition, as demonstrated in the Press Release dated 10/30/2013 titled “EPA Administrator McCarthy Announces \$6.6 Million in Funding to Support Chesapeake Bay Projects”. It appears this is a collaborative effort that includes the NRCS. The press release goes on to say:

*“... to create cleaner waters, restore habitat and strengthen iconic species such as brook trout and oysters, and engage homeowners and residents in environmental work supporting their community's quality of life.”*

There is certainly nothing about your project that seeks to “engage homeowners & residents” – we have spoken with one voice: We are against your current proposal and the WDFW’s management of the property.

If you are not able or willing to a) ban hunting, ban fishing, and encourage bird watching or b) remove the dike along the Samish River and restore the land to its pre-agricultural condition, then I would like to see you sell the Welts Property.

Thank you for the opportunity to again share my concerns and propose solutions.

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